

**Amendments to the Claims:**

1-118. (canceled)

119. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid having at least 80% nucleic acid sequence identity to:

- (a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;
- (b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;
- (c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;
- (d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

- (e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

120. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid of Claim 119 having at least 85% nucleic acid sequence identity to:

- (a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;
- (b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;
- (c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;
- (d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

- (e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

121. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid of Claim 119 having at least 90% nucleic acid sequence identity to:

- (a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;

(b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;

(c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

(d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

(e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

122. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid of Claim 119 having at least 95% nucleic acid sequence identity to:

(a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;

(b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;

(c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

(d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

(e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

123. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid of Claim 119 having at least 99% nucleic acid sequence identity to:

(a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;

(b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;

(c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

(d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

(e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

124. (previously presented) An isolated nucleic acid comprising:

(a) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345;  
(b) a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide;

(c) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

(d) the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344;

or

(e) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976;

wherein, the polypeptide encoded by said nucleic acid induces chondrocyte proliferation.

125. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid of Claim 124 comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345.

126. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid of Claim 124 comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO:345, lacking its associated signal peptide.

127-128. (canceled)

129. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid of Claim 124 comprising the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344.

130. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid of Claim 124 comprising the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:344.

131. (previously presented) The isolated nucleic acid of Claim 124 comprising the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976.

132. (currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid consisting of a fragment of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 344 or a complement thereof that is at least 20 nucleotide in length, that specifically hybridizes under stringent conditions to:

(a) ~~a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO: 345;~~  
(b) ~~a nucleic acid sequence encoding the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO: 345, lacking its associated signal peptide;~~

(c) ~~a nucleic acid sequence encoding the extracellular domain of the polypeptide of SEQ ID NO: 345;~~

(d) (b) the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 344 or a complement thereof, or;

(e) ~~the full-length coding sequence of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 344;~~

or

(f) (c) the full-length coding sequence of the cDNA deposited under ATCC accession number 209976 or a complement thereof;

wherein said stringent conditions employ hybridization using 50% formamide, 5X SSC, 50 mM sodium phosphate (pH 6.8), 0.1% sodium pyrophosphate, 5X Denhardt's solution, sonicated salmon sperm DNA (50 µg/ml), 0.1% SDS, and 10% dextran sulfate at 42°C, and washes at 42°C in 0.2X SSC, at 55°C in 50% formamide followed by a high-stringency wash at 55°C in 0.1X SSC, EDTA.

133-134. (canceled)

135. (previously presented) A vector comprising the nucleic acid of Claim 124.

136. (previously presented) The vector of Claim 135, wherein said nucleic acid is operably linked to control sequences recognized by a host cell transformed with the vector.

137. (previously presented) A host cell comprising the vector of Claim 135.

138. (previously presented) The host cell of Claim 137, wherein said cell is a CHO cell, an *E. coli* or a yeast cell.